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BOOK REVIEW

Journal of Scientific Exploration, Vol. 31, No. 2 - Letter to the Editor and Management Team of *Phenomena – Edwin C. May*

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21 April 2017

Review of Ms. Annie Jacobsen's book *Phenomena*

Please find attached my credentials for providing this review.

I originally began to provide a line-by-line critique; however, I found that I was rewriting a book that was inaccurate, self-serving, and a legally risky example of incompetent investigative reporting. One tell-tale indication of this is the lack of fact checking and providing independent second sources. Clearly this is devastating in the intelligence community and by implication undermines all investigative reporting.

Ms. Jacobsen has surrounded herself with excellent representation given the media exposure she has enjoyed. The book and this media frenzy continues to misrepresent not only the hard work and science conducted by the Star Gate team, but devalues the excellent operations carried out over the years.

A few examples of the most egregious errors follow:

- On page (Hardback) 492, Jacobsen claims she interviewed or otherwise corresponded with Dr. Jack Vorona, former Deputy Director of Science and Technical Intelligence for the Defense Intelligence Agency. I contacted him to verify this assertion. I was told in quite unambiguous language that he refused an interview despite Jacobsen's continued aggression. In my view, this is not an oversight or a typo—it is, in fact, an outright lie.

- Jacobsen devotes Chapter Two to "The Puharich Theory," but he was an infrequent bystander in the very early days of the SRI program in psi research. Neither his story about drugs nor any other aspect about him was involved in the government's effort whatsoever. The life and work of Puharich is a continuous theme throughout the book.

- Jacobsen devotes Chapter Six to "The Enigma of Uri Geller," a constant theme throughout the book. Geller was involved in only a short series of experiments lasting six weeks out of a 23-year long project. This

early SRI work was reported in the prestigious journal *Nature*—Targ, R. and Puthoff, H. E. (1974). Information transmission under conditions of sensory shielding. *Nature,* **252**, 602–607. This landmark publication in the history of ESP research and the government's involvement was ignored. Moreover, it is clearly stated on page 604 of the *Nature* paper:

> It has been widely reported that Geller has demonstrated the ability to bend metal by paranormal means. Although metal bending by Geller has been observed in our laboratory, we have not been able to combine such observations with adequately controlled experiments to obtain data sufficient to support the paranormal hypothesis. [Emphasis added]

Yet, Jacobsen devotes 15 separate pages to the general topic of metal bending which was hardly ever addressed in the remaining 20+ years of activity.

- There is substantial discussion about Edgar Mitchell in the book, which is totally unwarranted as he did not play any role in the history or activity of the U.S. Government's interest in psychic phenomena.

- James Randi is another name prominently displayed in 22 separate places implying active influence and/or valued critique of the program. The problem is he never appeared on site at SRI, nor was otherwise involved with the program.

- The defense contractor, Science Applications International Corp-oration, which provided a home for the Star Gate program for about five years (1991–1995) and accounted for approximately 25% of its total funding is totally absent from Jacobsen's writing.

- There are several other people and paranormal phenomena mentioned throughout the book which have not been part of the research program at SRI, SRI International, and SAIC during any stage of the 23-year research effort.

- Seemingly trivial, Jacobsen gets the name wrong of someone she correctly identifies as the "Father of modern American ESP experiments." His proper name is Joseph Banks Rhine not James Bank Rhine (page 41). I reported this lack of attention to detail to Sally Rhine Feather, his daughter, who posted a negative comment on Amazon describing this insulting error.

Conclusion: This brief collection of egregious errors clearly disqualifies *Phenomena* as being a definitive story of anything. It focuses on persons, topics, and theoretical assumptions that were not part of the program. Unfortunately, this book should appear more on a fiction shelf than a non-fiction story about a fascinating 23-year activity in applying and understanding psychic phenomena to problems of National Security.

Edwin C. May